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Culture, agricultural livelihoods, and sustainable development: making sense of the proceedings of the 1st Community-Embedded FAIDA Conference in the Rwenzoris

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Abstract:

Wicked problems confronting society, including those due to climate change, continue to prompt the ambition for collaboration between the scientific and non-scientific communities, including policy. In line with this ambition, the Forum for Action-Research on Inclusive-Sustainable Development Agenda (FAIDA) was specifically established in sub-Saharan Africa. Currently meeting in the Rwenzori Mountains, FAIDA Conference Series operate as a Community of Practice, bringing together diverse stakeholders to discuss societal challenges and explore ways to make Sustainable Development truly inclusive. This essay is narrative of what transpired in the inaugural event—the FAIDA 1 Conference—and draws lessons for similar initiatives that aim to be community embedded. Held on December 8, 2023, in the Rwenzoris (Uganda), the FAIDA 1 Conference focused on culture, agricultural livelihoods, and sustainable development. The proceedings of these events are in line with the various categories it draws together: the Next-Generation Scholars (secondary school students), the Current Generation Scholars (scientists from research or academic institutions who presented scientific papers), and practitioners and policymakers (who engaged with the first two). A critique of the Next-Generation Scholars raised critical questions about the limited practical and cultural embeddedness of Current Generation Scholars and academia in general, particularly in sustainable agriculture. A related aspect is that of the actual activism of scientists, in this case, in culturally embedded sustainable agriculture promotion. These insights exemplify the core of the FAIDA 1 Conference while exposing implications for community research and action that operate at the interface of science and non-science to tackle wicked problems confronting society.

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